

There's Something Missing in My Life, Part 2 - Romans 5:3-4 - October 30th, 2011

- Today's teaching will be part two in series I've chosen to title; "There's Something Missing in My Life." I would like to begin by asking a question.
 - Do you find yourself losing hope when you go through a particularly stressful time in your life, with all the pressures and busyness of your life?
 - Maybe that hope you once had, is now missing in your life, and it makes whatever you're going through, infinitely more difficult to get through.
- I want to encourage you to take heart. Here's why; the text that we before us has the propensity to restore that hopelessness, with hopefulness.
 - I'm going to proceed with the presupposition that we all live stressful lives, and that it's not if we have stress, it's how much stress do we have.
 - In order to determine that, I'll present you with a "stress-test" that I found a number of years ago when I was in the pastorate on the mainland.

THE DOLPHIN STRESS TEST: For those who are overwhelmed and have too much stress in their life. Here's how the test works. In a moment you'll view a slide with a picture of two dolphins. The two dolphins appear normal when viewed by someone who has normal stress. To the individual with abnormal stress and fatigue, the two dolphins will appear abnormal. Anything other than a slight color difference between the two dolphins appearing in the picture is an indication of abnormally high stress levels. The greater the abnormality, the greater the stress.



- OK, now that we've determined that none of us have any stress in our lives whatsoever, let's revisit the first three that we found in verses 1-2.

1. Peace with God (Verse 1)

- v1 Paul says that since we have been justified through faith by God, we now have peace with God, by virtue of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

2. Access to God (Verse 2a)

- v2a Paul goes on to write that through Jesus Christ, we have gained access by faith into this grace, which is now the basis upon which we stand.

3. Confidence in God (Verse 2b)

- v2b Paul explains how it is that we can rejoice in the hope, or maybe better said, have confidence in the hope that we'll receive the glory of God.

4. Character of God (Verses 3-4)

- (3) Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; (4) perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- v3 Paul says not only can we rejoice in hope, we can also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know what it will produce namely, perseverance.
- v4 He goes on to describe how we are able to rejoice in sufferings because perseverance produces character, and character produces hope.
- It's important to know that the word for sufferings, or tribulations, depending on your translation, carries with it the idea of stressful crushing's.

- This is one of the best examples of peeling back the layers in the Word of God so as to explain the "why" behind the "what" of our stressful lives.
- I think you would all have to agree with me that if there was ever a man who knew a thing or two about stress and pressure, it would be Paul.
- We get a glimpse of a day in the stressful life of the Apostle Paul when he writes about the adversity in his second letter to the church of Corinth.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 NIV (23) Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. (24) Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, (26) I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. (27) I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. (28) Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

- Suffice it to say, Paul has earned the right, by the Holy Spirit to speak into my life as an example for me and teacher to me as it relates to stress.
- Have you ever noticed how it is that you don't know you're lacking something in your life, until you see it demonstrated in someone else's life?
- I see in the Apostle Paul's life something that I both need and want in my life, and it's also mirrored in the life of James, the half brother of Jesus.

James 1:2-4 NIV Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, (3) because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- In other words, if this is what's lacking in your life; missing in your life, then this is how you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
- There are no short cuts! Hope comes vis-a-vis the maturity of character that is only produced from persevering through stressful trials in life.
- Conversely, when it's stressful I won't remain hopeful. My immaturity of character had never developed by persevering through the trials of life.

Charles Spurgeon - "By perseverance the snail reached the ark."

- By way of illustration consider the Cypress tree. The stress of the wind against it is that which produces the deep root system that strengthens it.
 - The Cypress tree is known for having one of the strongest and deepest root systems beneath it and it's proportionate to the branches above it.
 - We, like the Cypress tree, can keep our cool in the shade of our branches proportionate to the depth of maturity in the root system of our lives.
- Could a depth of character be that which I'm missing in my life? If it is, then I need look no further than the thick dust accumulating on my Bible.
 - If you were to ask me what one of the deadliest dangers was to us as Christians, I would have to cite our shallow knowledge of the Bible as one.

Just this last Wednesday, October 26th, I read an article by Stephen Gray, titled; "10 Deadly Sins That Will Kill Your Church." One of the ten was "Biblical Illiteracy," and in it, he writes that; "The latest research by Gallup and other pollsters reveal that most long time members of churches don't really know what they Bible says. Phrases like; "God helps those who help themselves" are regularly quoted as scripture."

Charles Spurgeon - "A bible that's falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't."